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ABSTRACT

This eighth chapter in "Elementary School Counseling in a Changing World" presents four journal articles concerned with the "back to the basics" movement and with programs to help elementary school counselors promote academic achievement among students. "The Effects of Classroom Guidance on Children's Success in School" by Edwin Gerler, Jr. and Ronald Anderson describes a large-scale, experimental study of classroom guidance in North Carolina. "Working with Young Procrastinators: Elementary School Students Who Do Not Complete School Assignments" by Linda Morse discusses changing the attitudes and work habits of elementary school students who procrastinate. "Multimodal Counseling: Motivating Children to Attend School Through Friendship Groups" by Donald Keat, Kathy Metzgar, Deborah Raykovitz, and James McDonald illustrates how to approach the humanistic goal of improved personal relationships by multimodal means. "Elementary School Counseling Research and the Classroom Learning Environment" by Edwin Gerler, Jr. reviews the research published in "Elementary School Guidance and Counseling" from 1974 to 1984, exploring research evidence of elementary school counselors' effectiveness in helping children to improve classroom behavior, explore feelings, improve socially, and enhance sensory awareness and mental imagery. The chapter concludes with a set of issues for elementary school counselors to consider about learning in a changing world. (NB)

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# CHAPTER 8

# LEARNING IN A CHANGING WORLD

American society has placed emphasis on the need for children to learn basic academic skills. Parents throughout the country complain that children are not learning to read, write, and perform basic mathematics. Governmental and private commissions have studied the poor academic achievement of children and are asking educators to account for the failure of our schools in this important area. If elementary school counselors are to fulfill their mission in schools, they must collaborate with teachers, parents, and school administrators in an effort to improve children's achievement. This chapter discusses the matter of "back to the basics" and offers programs to help elementary school counselors promote academic achievement among students.

Chapter 8 begins with a study of the "Succeeding in School" program of classroom guidance. This ten-session program includes lessons on role-models for succeeding in school, being comfortable in school, being responsible in school, listening in school, asking for help in school, ways to improve school work, cooperating with peers at school, cooperating with teachers, discovering the bright side of school, and exploring the wonders of self. Other articles in the chapter cover such topics as:

1. Counseling with parents to improve the attitudes and achievement of remedial readers
2. Changing the attitudes and work habits of children who procrastinate with school work
3. Motivating children to attend school through multimodal friendship groups

Chapter 8 concludes with a review of the research published in the *Elementary School Guidance and Counseling* journal from 1974 to 1984. This review addresses the critical question, "Do elementary school counselors contribute to children's learning? The review establishes that elementary school counseling programs have positive influences on the affective, behavioral, and interpersonal domains of children's lives and, in turn, have significant effects on children's academic success. This research review provides counselors with evidence they can use to obtain increased support from parents, teachers, and school administrators.

Educational goals have fluctuated considerably throughout the 20th Century in the United States. In the 1950s schools were concerned about children's achievement in math and science, largely due to the launching of Sputnik by the U.S.S.R. The social unrest of the 1960s and 1970s brought children's emotional and social needs to the attention of educators. Education is now back to a period of increased interest in children's achievement in basic skills. This interest in "back to the basics" appears destined to continue into the 1990s. Elementary school counselors, therefore, must continue to demonstrate their contributions to children's willingness and readiness to achieve success in academic subject areas. Chapter 8 helps counselors work toward this end.

# The Effects of Classroom Guidance on Children's Success in School

**Edwin R. Gerler, Jr.**
**Ronald F. Anderson**

During the 1970s classroom guidance was a high priority activity for school counselors, particularly at the elementary school level. The counselor's need for visibility in the school was an important argument for classroom guidance, along with the needs for preventing psychological problems among children and for promoting psychological maturity in children. Although these needs still exist, classroom guidance seems to be losing ground in some school districts where teachers and parents want less time for ancillary programs and more time for basic skills programs.

The results of studies on classroom guidance suggest that school systems should evaluate such programs thoroughly before abandoning them. Research indicates that group guidance may positively influence children's classroom behavior, attitudes toward school, and ultimately their academic success. For instance, Cobb and Richards (1983) found that classroom guidance in association with other counseling strategies significantly reduced behavioral problems among fourth- and fifth-grade children. Gerler, Kinney, and Anderson (1985) found that group guidance used with other behavior change techniques significantly improved the language arts and math grades of underachieving children. Downing (1977) discovered that group work designed to modify children's behavior had the additional benefit of improving achievement significantly. Other researchers (Deffenbacher & Kemper, 1974; Wirth, 1977) noted further positive changes in behavior and academic performance among children involved in various forms of group guidance.

In addition to the findings about the positive effects of group guidance on behavior, there is research indicating that children's attitudes toward school may improve from participation in classroom guidance activities. Day and Griffin (1980) reported data showing that children's increased enjoyment of school was attributable to participation in classroom guidance. Gerler (1980) found that children's school attendance increased significantly because of their involvement in classroom guidance, an indication that students' attitudes toward school had improved dramatically. Miller's (1973) report on psychological education research also showed childrens' attitudes toward school improving from participation in group guidance programs. These findings indicate the potential value of classroom guidance in children's education.

Unfortunately, many studies of classroom guidance programs have been limited to a single school or a single school district and have involved relatively few children. The studies have also typically employed only one or two measures of the programs' effects. There simply have not been enough studies examining multiple effects of classroom guidance on large numbers of children from varying social and economic environments.

The discussion to follow is of a large-scale, experimental study of classroom guidance in North Carolina. The study was an attempt to fill a gap in the counseling literature by (a) exposing large numbers of children to systematic classroom guidance and (b) by examining multiple effects of classroom guidance. The effects of group guidance on children's attitudes toward school, classroom behavior, and achievement in academic subjects were specifically examined. These variables were chosen because they are important aspects of children's schooling and because previous research (already cited here) has suggested that classroom guidance influences these variables positively.

## Method

### Participants

This study involved 896 fourth- and fifth-grade children from 18 different schools in virtually every geographic region of North Carolina. The participants included children from varying economic, social, and cultural environments. A total of 18 elementary school counselors volunteered to conduct classroom guidance sessions for the study.

### Procedure

Elementary school counselors throughout North Carolina were sent information about conducting classroom guidance studies in their schools. The 18 counselors who volunteered to participate received packets of study materials that included (a) directions for implementing the study, (b) a 10-session classroom guidance unit titled "Succeeding in School," (c) instruments to measure the effects of the unit and directions for scoring the instruments, and (d) forms for recording the data collected.

*Counselor's directions for implementing the study.* Counselors received careful written instructions for implementing the classroom guidance study in their schools. The instructions identified the purpose of the study and outlined specific steps for counselors to follow in carrying out the study. Counselors

were instructed to (a) explain to school principals the purpose of the study and assure principals that all data collected would be kept confidential and that no student would be identified individually to anyone outside the school, (b) discuss the nature of the study with fourth- and fifth-grade teachers and then assign classrooms randomly to treatment and control groups, (c) conduct the classroom guidance unit "Succeeding in School" twice a week for 5 weeks with the children in the treatment group (the children in the control group received the same unit after the study was completed), (d) administer the Attitude Toward School instrument (Miller, 1973) to each student during the week before and the week after the classroom guidance unit was presented, and (e) have teachers complete the Elementary Guidance Behavior Rating Scale (EGBRS) for each student and record students' conduct grades, language grades, and math grades immediately before and after the guidance unit.

*The classroom guidance unit.* The classroom guidance unit, "Succeeding in School," which counselors conducted with the treatment group children, was composed of 10 sessions of 30 to 40 minutes each. Session 1, Success in School, provided students with the ground rules for discussion and with the rationale for a classroom guidance unit on school success. Session 2, Being Comfortable in School, introduced the topic of relaxation and offered students an opportunity to practice some relaxation methods. Session 3, Being Responsible in School, had students discuss the meaning of responsibility and gave them an opportunity to discuss times that they had behaved responsibly at school. Session 4, Listening in School, had students discuss the importance of listening in school and allowed them to practice listening skills. Also, they shared personal experiences about the benefits of good listening. Session 5, Asking for Help in School, involved students in games designed to improve their skills in listening to teachers and in asking teachers for help. Session 6, How to Improve at School, asked students to identify a subject they would like to improve in and to discuss how they might work toward improving. Students discussed improvements they had already made in their school work. Session 7, Cooperating with Peers at School, included role playing activities to help students practice cooperation. Students also discussed the benefits of cooperating with peers. Session 8, Cooperating with Teachers, had students discuss several unfinished statements such as, "If I were teacher for a day, I'd. . . ." and "I would like to get along better with my teacher, but my problem is. . . ." Session 9, The Bright Side of School, had students identify and discuss positive happenings at school. They also thought of ways to change negative aspects of school. Session 10, The Bright Side of Me, allowed students to discuss their personal strengths and to receive positive feedback from one another. (A detailed outline of the classroom guidance unit is available from the senior author.)

*Instrumentation and data collection.* Counselors used the following five measures to assess students' progress resulting from participation in the classroom guidance unit.

1. *Ratings of student behavior.* Teachers completed the EGBRS for each child in the treatment and control groups during the week before and the week after counselors led the classroom guidance unit. The EGBRS, which was designed by a team of counselors, counselor educators, and education consultants and used in two previous elementary school guidance studies (Anderson, Kinney, & Gerler, 1984; Gerler, Kinney, & Anderson, 1985), consists of 20 items in which teachers rate negative classroom behaviors on a Likert scale ranging from *behavior observed constantly* (5) to *behavior observed never* (1). The highest total score possible on the scale is 100 and the lowest possible is 20, with lower scores indicating preferred classroom behavior. The EGBRS includes questions such as, "How often does a child interfere with the activities of others, fail to give attention to the task at hand, or use available time unwisely?" No data on reliability or validity are available on this instrument.

2. *Students' conduct grades.* Teachers recorded classroom conduct grades for treatment and control group children before and after the classroom guidance unit. Conduct grades were based on a 12-point scale, from A+ (12) through F (1). The pretreatment grades were regular classroom conduct grades averaged from the grading period immediately before the guidance unit. The posttreatment grades were regular classroom conduct grades averaged from the grading period during which the guidance unit was implemented.

3. *Students' attitudes toward school.* Children in the treatment and control groups completed a modified version of the Attitude Toward School instrument during the week before and the week after the guidance unit. This instrument has been used by the Minnesota Department of Education to assess the effects of psychological education activities. It consists of 25 multiple-choice sentence completion items in which children's attitudes toward such matters as teaching, subject matter, and homework are assessed. Each item offers four choices to students, with the first choice indicating the most negative attitude toward school and the fourth choice indicating the most positive attitude. The highest total score possible on the scale is 100 and the lowest possible is 25, with higher scores indicating more positive attitudes toward school. No data on reliability or validity are available on this instrument.

4. *Students' achievement in language arts.* Teachers recorded language arts grades for treatment and control group children before and after the classroom guidance unit. Again, grades were based on a 12-point scale, from A+ (12) through F (1). The pretreatment grades were regular classroom language grades averaged from the grading period immediately before the guidance unit. The

posttreatment grades were regular classroom language grades averaged from the grading period during which the guidance unit was implemented.

5. *Students' achievement in mathematics.* Teachers recorded math grades for treatment and control group children before and after the classroom guidance unit. The grades were based on a 12-point scale, from A+ (12) through F (1). The pretreatment grades were regular classroom math grades averaged from the grading period immediately before the guidance unit. The posttreatment grades were regular classroom math grades averaged from the grading period during which the guidance unit was implemented.

## Results

Table 1 shows the changes in the five dependent measures from pretreatment to posttreatment for students in the treatment and control groups. The data were analyzed using an analysis of variance (ANOVA) on the change scores from pretreatment to posttreatment.

The treatment group's scores on the EGBRS declined (mean change of –3.52), whereas the control group's scores increased (mean change of 1.46). The difference in score changes between the groups was significant, $F(1, 894) = 61.60$, $p < .001$. Because lower scores on the EGBRS indicate preferred classroom behavior, the treatment group's behavior improved significantly over the control group's on this measure of classroom behavior.

Analysis of the changes in conduct grades indicates that the treatment group outperformed the control group. The treatment group's conduct grades improved slightly (mean change of 0.52), whereas the control group's conduct grades did not (mean change of –0.20). This difference in conduct grade changes between the groups was significant, $F(1, 894) = 27.00$, $p < .001$.

The treatment group's scores on the Attitude Toward School instrument increased (mean change of 1.51), whereas the control group's scores decreased (mean change of –1.21). This difference in score changes was significant, $F(1, 866) = 18.37$, $p < .001$. Because higher scores on this instrument indicate more positive attitudes toward school, the school attitude of the treatment group improved significantly over that of the control group. (The degree of freedom within groups on this measure is slightly smaller than on the other measures because some students were absent when the attitude instrument was administered.)

The treatment group's language grades increased slightly (mean change of 0.31), whereas the control group's language grades did not change (mean change of 0.00). This difference in language grade changes between the groups approached significance, $F(1, 894) = 3.12$, $p < .10$. It is not possible to

**Table 1**
**ANOVA on Mean Changes in Dependent Measures from Pretreatment to Posttreatment**

| Groups | Pretreatment | | Posttreatment | | Change | | ANOVA | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* | *F* | *p* |
| *Behavior ratings* | | | | | | | | |
| Treatment ($n = 453$) | 46.32 | 9.90 | 42.80 | 10.43 | –3.52 | 10.27 | 61.60 | <.001 |
| Control ($n = 443$) | 46.41 | 8.43 | 47.87 | 8.73 | 1.46 | 8.62 | | |
| *Conduct grades* | | | | | | | | |
| Treatment ($n = 453$) | 7.88 | 2.12 | 8.40 | 1.63 | 0.52 | 1.87 | 27.00 | <.001 |
| Control ($n = 443$) | 7.93 | 3.10 | 7.73 | 2.11 | –0.20 | 2.26 | | |
| *School attitude scores* | | | | | | | | |
| Treatment ($n = 436$) | 76.12 | 9.94 | 77.63 | 9.60 | 1.51 | 9.73 | 18.37 | <.001 |
| Control ($n = 432$) | 76.00 | 8.91 | 74.79 | 8.73 | –1.21 | 8.96 | | |
| *Language grades* | | | | | | | | |
| Treatment ($n = 453$) | 7.36 | 2.92 | 7.67 | 1.93 | 0.31 | 2.37 | 3.12 | <.10 |
| Control ($n = 443$) | 7.31 | 2.31 | 7.31 | 2.98 | –0.00 | 2.92 | | |
| *Math grades* | | | | | | | | |
| Treatment ($n = 453$) | 7.85 | 2.77 | 7.68 | 2.48 | –0.17 | 2.63 | 0.98 | NS |
| Control ($n = 443$) | 7.87 | 2.65 | 7.88 | 2.79 | 0.01 | 2.78 | | |

*Note*. Behavior ratings ranged from 20 to 100, with lower ratings indicating preferred classroom behavior. School attitude scores ranged from 25 to 100, with higher scores indicating positive attitudes toward school. The conduct, language, and math grades were based on a 12-point scale, with A = 12 through F = 1.

conclude, however, that the treatment group's performance in language arts improved significantly over that of the control group's.

Analysis of the changes in math grades shows no change in either the treatment group's grades (mean change of –0.17) or the control group's grades (mean change of 0.01). The difference in math grade changes between the groups was not statistically significant, $F(1, 894) = 0.98$, n.s.

## Discussion

The results of the study show that elementary school counselors can use classroom guidance to influence children's classroom behavior positively. Several other studies (Kern & Hankins, 1977; Kern, Kelley, & Downey, 1973; Moracco & Kazandkian, 1977; West, Sonstegard, & Hagerman, 1980) have shown that counselors can use alternative approaches to change children's behavior, but the use of classroom guidance offers benefits that differ from other behavior change strategies. Prevention of classroom behavior problems may be among the benefits. In this study, for instance, the control group children's behavior did not simply remain stable; it became worse. The treatment group's behavior improved. This improvement probably occurred because children in the treatment group became more aware of the benefits of certain behaviors and because counselors reinforced appropriate behaviors during classroom guidance sessions.

A second outcome of this study further supports the notion that classroom guidance can prevent problems. The children who did not participate in the classroom guidance unit offered in this study became less positive about school. In contrast, the treatment group children's attitudes toward school improved. This improvement may be accounted for by the children's group discussions of positive school experiences, by their discussions about how to change negative school experiences, and by their enjoyment of the classroom guidance sessions. If classroom guidance influences children's attitudes positively, as indicated here, it may also prevent such persistent problems as truancy and dropping out of school. In fact, a previous longitudinal study (Gerler, 1980) showed that guidance strategies of this kind have positive effects on school attendance.

The other results of this study—those related directly to academic achievement—also seem promising. The changes in language grades that favored the treatment group at a level approaching statistical significance should encourage further, long-term studies of classroom guidance. Such studies might show whether the verbal give and take in classroom guidance improves children's language skills significantly. That academic grades did not decline significantly for the treatment group indicates that classroom guidance does not detract from basic skills areas, as some teachers and parents have argued (Gerler, 1982).

The outcomes of this study must be viewed cautiously. To begin with, the teachers and counselors who participated in the study knew the group assignments of the student participants. The possibility exists that this knowledge biased the results of the study in favor of the treatment group. Also, because the measurement instruments used in the study—the EGBRS and the Attitude Toward School measure—have undetermined reliability and validity, the scores collected from the instruments cannot be viewed with complete confidence. It is encouraging, however, that the scores on the EGBRS, which favored the treatment group children over the control group children, were corroborated by the conduct grades received by each group.

Some caution is also necessary regarding the assignment of students to the treatment and control groups. Because of practical considerations, counselors could not randomly assign individual students to the two groups but instead randomly assigned whole classrooms to the experimental groups. Analysis of pretest data, however, showed no significant differences between the groups, thus providing reasonable assurance that random assignment was effective.

Another limitation of the study was the lack of a placebo group. (Critelli and Neumann [1984] have argued persuasively in favor of using placebos in studies of psychological interventions.) The lack of a placebo creates the possibility that other factors, including the novelty or perhaps the intensity of the experience, caused the observed changes. Virtually all the children involved in the study, however, had previously experienced classroom guidance (albeit not as systematically as in this study). It seems likely, therefore, that the content of the guidance sessions rather than the novelty of the experience contributed to the treatment group's progress. An alternative research design might have reduced the need for a placebo group, but the simplicity of the design used was helpful for the larger population studied.

There is one other limitation of this study worth noting: Because of the study's size and the wide geographic distances separating schools involved in the study, researchers had difficulty monitoring whether counselors conducted the guidance sessions as prescribed. The lack of time and funds for travel made it impossible for the researchers to have regular, on-site visits with counselors who conducted the classroom guidance units. If, however, the number and types of phone calls received by the researchers during the study indicated the desire of counselors to carry out this study correctly, then this limitation can be disregarded.

This study has numerous implications for practitioners and researchers alike. First, the results indicate the potential of classroom guidance for meeting important educational needs, namely, improving classroom behavior, preventing problem behavior, and encouraging positive attitudes toward school. Furthermore, the results encourage additional research related to the effects of counseling on children's achievement.

A component that could have been included in this study and probably should be included in future studies of this kind is a premeasure, postmeasure of psychosocial development. Even though it is heartening to observe that classroom guidance helps prevent problem behaviors, it would be equally valuable to learn more about the developmental significance of classroom guidance.

Perhaps the most important benefit of this study is in the realization that researchers and counselors can cooperate to carry out large-scale experimental studies of counseling services. Although counselors can and do evaluate their own work, they get a better perspective on the effects of guidance and counseling when results are pooled, as in this study. Small-scale studies by individual counselors, although important, carry little hope of statistically significant findings.

In conclusion, the type of study described here has considerable potential for evaluating counseling services. The American Association for Counseling and Development (AACD) is, in fact, already seeking research funds from private foundations to carry out a similar study on a national scale. Research efforts of this kind should help counselors better understand the nature and value of their services and should demonstrate their contributions to the national goal of educational excellence.

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# Working With Young Procrastinators: Elementary School Students Who Do Not Complete School Assignments

**Linda A. Morse**

*John just doesn't turn in his work!*
*Sue hasn't had recess in weeks, yet she still doesn't turn in her language!*

Sound familiar? Many procrastinating students are referred to counselors each school year. In the past, the methods used to assist procrastinators involved behavior management plans as well as instruction on good homework habits and study skills. Yet, there are always some students for whom nothing seems to work. When every approach has been tried and regression rather than improvement occurs, counselors, students, teachers, and parents share in the frustration and discouragement. Because procrastination seems to be negatively related to achievement (Broadus, 1983), few adults are willing to give up on these procrastinating students.

Broadus (1984) described procrastinating students as those who:

1. Have good intentions of doing their homework and make such statements as, "I'll do it. Let me turn it in tomorrow or later today."
2. Focus on what they have not done rather than on what they have accomplished. Statements such as, "I can't do my math," may be made when there is only one part of a math assignment that they do not understand.
3. Seldom use low grades or teacher comments to improve performance. Bad papers are quickly thrown away.
4. Have a short attention span.
5. Believe they work better under pressure.
6. Frequently say, "I don't understand," or "I can't do this," when asked why they are not working.
7. Resent being reminded that homework is still not done.
8. Say that they can do better and then do not follow through to hand in the next assignment.

Because Broadus's characteristics of procrastinators so vividly fit many elementary-age students, I began to study the topic of procrastination and to apply the ideas from the literature on procrastination in counseling interventions with young children.

## Literature Review

As a general term, procrastination has received little attention in the professional literature (Ottens, 1982), although some research and theory have focused on its specific components. Of the 16 causes and characteristics of procrastinators described by Broadus (1983), 7 seem especially related to elementary-age children. The seven factors of procrastination—self-concept, perfection, fear of failure, fear of success, rebellion against authority, internal locus of control, and lack of skill—are described below. Additionally, the interventions common to four programs (Broadus, 1983; Burka & Yuen, 1982; Ottens, 1982; Zinger, 1983) are described. Finally, the importance of a multimodal intervention is reported.

### Factors of Procrastination

Burka and Yuen (1983), Beery (1975), and Ottens (1982) defined procrastination as a way of coping so as not to reveal one's weakness by completely testing one's ability. Broadus (1983) considered procrastination a general way of relating to people, managing tasks, and " . . . habitually postponing doing tasks that you feel ought to be done immediately" (p. 15).

*Self-concept.* Some authors link low academic achievement with low self-concept (Kanoy, Johnson, & Kanoy, 1980; Skaalvik, 1983), whereas others (Beery, 1975; Broadus, 1983; Burka & Yuen, 1983; Deci, 1975; Ellis & Harper, 1975; Ellis & Knaus, 1977; Raphael, 1983; Zinger, 1983) go a step further in establishing a relationship between procrastination, achievement, and self-concept. Beery (1975) and Burka and Yuen (1983) described how some people see their self-worth only in terms of their ability and performance: They are worthy people only when they have performed well. Thus, by procrastinating one has put forth no effort to perform a task and the established self-image is not threatened.

*Fear of failure.* Many authors (Beery, 1975; Broadus, 1983; Burka & Yuen, 1983; Deci, 1975; Dye, 1984; Ellis & Harper, 1975) have described the fear of failure as having unrealistic attitudes and expectations for performance. The procrastinating behaviors allow a person to avoid the risk of failure and protect the self-esteem.

*Perfection.* Closely related to the fear of failure is the need for perfection. If one cannot complete a task perfectly, then there is no point in starting the task. A person with this belief seems to have no appreciation for progress toward the goal, only for the goal itself.

*Fear of success.* Sometimes procrastinators perceive that success leads to negative outcomes. The more one accomplishes, the more one must do; the

competition to beat one's previous record is constant. Parents and teachers often make statements such as "I know you can do better," intended as encouragement, whereas the procrastinating student perceives them as pressure (Broadus, 1983; Burka & Yuen, 1983; Dye, 1984).

*Rebellion against authority.* Sometimes the only way procrastinators believe that they have control over others is by not doing what is expected or requested. Procrastination then becomes a way of expressing anger and hostility toward those in authority (Ellis & Kraus, 1977) or a way of rebelling against authority (Broadus, 1983).

*Locus of control.* Another characteristic of procrastinators is the feeling of being overwhelmed. Procrastinators frequently see themselves as having so much to do and not knowing where to begin; therefore, they never start. Often they wait for someone to rescue them by either doing the task for them or saying it does not need to be done. Burka and Yuen (1983) reported that because the family often does not encourage children to have a sense of mastery and control over their own lives, children become discouraged at an early age. Beery (1975) proposed that procrastinators must learn to focus more on making choices related to increasing their own sense of self-esteem and fulfillment and less on meeting the expectations of others.

Thus, if students learn to be more internally controlled, they will be more likely to take action and procrastinate less. Learning to attribute failures to external control and success to internal control may also have a positive effect on procrastination (Bar-Tal, Goldberg, & Knaani, 1984; Kaneko, 1984; Rotter, 1982).

*Lack of skill.* Those procrastinators who have not learned the skills to approach and complete tasks in a more organized way are more likely to leave a task unfinished and be overcome by feelings of frustration, failure, and low self-esteem (Dobson, Campbell, & Dobson, 1982; Ottens, 1982; Zinger, 1983). Broadus (1983) pointed out, however, that teaching problem-solving, goal-setting, and time management skills is a necessary, but not sufficient, intervention for treating procrastinators. Interventions must also address the fears and negative feelings and attitudes of procrastinators.

*Reported treatment interventions.* The four intervention programs of Broadus (1983), Burka and Yuen (1982), Ottens (1982), and Zinger (1983) have several common intervention strategies: (a) becoming aware of procrastination's causes and behaviors, (b) changing internal dialogue or reframing, and (c) building self-esteem. All four programs use the strategy of goal setting. The four programs varied in length from 5 to 12 weekly sessions that lasted 1 to 2 1/2 hours each session. The researchers, however, reported limited empirical research on the effects of treatment for procrastinators, and none conducted studies with elementary-age students.

In contrast to the programs mentioned above, Lazarus (1979) believed that interventions must be broader based and include that aspect of the personality that "is made up of behaviors, affect, sensation, imagery, cognition, interpersonal responses, and our own biological substrate" (p. 8). Similarly, Keat (1978) proposed that this multimodal approach will produce faster and longer lasting results where behavior change is the goal. In this instance, the intervention strategy would address the multidimensional nature of personality and include activities that focused on developing awareness of procrastinating behaviors and causes, skills in time management, and realistic goal setting.

## A Multimodal Intervention

The purpose of the multimodal group counseling intervention (Lazarus, 1978; Keat, 1978) was to assist procrastinating students in grades 3–6 in the completion of their school tasks. It was expected that the intervention would result in a greater percentage of school assignments being completed by those procrastinating students who participated in multimodal group counseling when compared to a similar group who did not participate.

Following consultation with teachers, I used the term *procrastinator* to refer to students turning in less than 75% of their work. Because students were given work compatible with their ability level, I assumed that the procrastination was not attributable to an inability to do the work, and in fact all identified procrastinators fell within the normal range of intelligence.

Students in grades 3–6 who turned in less than 75% of the assigned class work during a 2-week period before treatments were considered for the study. More specifically, I tabulated assignments for each student in each subject and then found the total number of assignments assigned and the total number of assignments completed. The total number of assignments completed during this time period was divided by the total number assigned. Because the number of assigned tasks varied from student to student, it was necessary to find a method of standardization. The calculation that resulted from dividing the number of completed assignments by the number of assigned tasks was multiplied by 10, thus converting the number of completed tasks to a base of 10. This converted score represented the homework completion rate.

Using this method, 31 students in the four grades were identified as procrastinators. By grade levels there were 4 students in grade 3, 7 in grade 4, 7 in grade 5, and 13 in grade 6. Because of developmental needs all of the identified third graders participated in the multimodal group counseling, whereas the remaining 27 students were randomly assigned to the treatment group or were placed on a waiting list. To facilitate the treatment process, students were grouped by grade level.

### Multimodal Group Counseling

I conducted the three groups that were assigned to that school. There were 29 sessions of approximately 25 minutes each. When possible, groups met three times each week until the last 3 weeks, during which they met twice a week. The use of a dated checklist ensured that all activities were completed by each of the three treatment groups. A summary outline of sessions in the multimodal treatment plan is included in Table 1.

The causes of procrastination addressed in each group were low self-esteem, fear of failure, perfectionism, fear of success, rebellion against authority, lack of problem-solving skills, and locus of control (Broadus, 1983). The treatment strategies were developed from the modes of personality described by Keat (1978), which include health (H); emotions-feelings (E); learning-school (L); personal relationships (P); imagination (I); need to know (N); and guidance (G) of acts, behavior, and consequences (HELPING). Thus, treatment strategies included discussion of feelings, completion of worksheets on procrastination behaviors, verbal expression of feelings, guided imagery, and role plays on decision making.

Although goal setting was an important component, the goal-setting emphasis was on learning new skills and information about oneself rather than on achieving one's established goals. There was no punishment or negative consequence when a student reported that a goal was not met. Rather, the counselor offered help in determining what was difficult about meeting that goal and expressed confidence that there would be another goal that would be met.

## Assessment and Results

During the 2 weeks immediately following the last group session, data on the total number of assignments given and the total number of assignments completed were tabulated for each student as was done before group participation. The resulting homework submission rate was used as the unit of comparison between students who participated in the multimodal group counseling and those on the waiting list. A $t$ test was used to determine whether any difference existed between these two groups in their homework submission rate 2 weeks after the completion of group activities.

Two weeks after the groups were terminated, the mean converted homework completion score for students who participated in the multimodal group was 7.96 ($SD$ = 1.53); the mean converted score of the students on the waiting list was 6.74 ($SD$ = 1.25). The difference between the means was compared by a $t$ test yielding a $t$ of –2.26 ($p < .05$). The difference between the means of the control group before treatment ($M$ = 5.51, $SD$ = 1.46) and the treatment group before treatment ($M$ = 6.27, $SD$ = 1.14) was not significant ($t = 1.50$, $p > .05$).

**Table 1**
**Multimodal Group Intervention**

| Mode | Group activities | Procrastinator characteristics |
|---|---|---|
| *H*ealth | Participated in relaxation exercises. | Locus of control |
| *E*motions | Brainstormed & discussed feeling words. | Fear of failure; fear of success |
| | Shared common fears. | Fear of failure; fear of success |
| | Discussed and shared feelings of frustration. | Perfection |
| | Discussed power and the power one feels. | Locus of control |
| *L*earning/school | Shared feelings about school, favorite subjects, performance levels. | Self-concept |
| | Discussed problems in completing assignments. | Rebellion against authority; fear of failure; fear of success |
| | Completed worksheet "Getting Work Done Survey." | Perfection; fear of failure |
| *P*eople/personal relationships | Shared feelings about family & friends | Rebellion against authority |
| | Discussed relationships with classmates and the ability to function in the classroom group. | Rebellion against authority; locus of control |
| | Practiced communication skills. | Lack of skill |
| *I*magery/interests | Discussed strengths and weaknesses. | Fear of failure; Self-concept |
| | Shared likes and dislikes. | Self-concept |
| | Showed the filmstrip *Vultures* (Simon, 1977). | Self-concept |
| | Discussed self put-downs. | Fear of failure; Self-concept |
| | Participated in guided imagery to develop positive self-image. | Self-concept |

*(continued)*

**Table 1 (*Continued*)**

| Mode | Group activities | Procrastinator characteristics |
|---|---|---|
| *N*eed to Know | Discussed differences between thoughts & feelings. | Self-concept; rebellion against authority |
| | Identified thoughts & feelings under positive or negative categories. | Self-concept; rebellion against authority |
| | Practiced positive self-talk. | Self-concept |
| | Role-played positive & negative aspects of putdowns. | Self-concept |
| | Discussed how choices are made. | Lack of skill; locus of control |
| | Listed choices students make during their day. | Locus of control |
| *G*uidance of actions | Identified "putting-off" behaviors. | Perfection; fear of failure; fear of success |
| | Discussed ways time is wasted and saved. | Lack of skill |
| | Listed activities to be done in a day and time required to accomplish them. | Lack of skill |
| | Set priorities for completing tasks. | Lack of skill |
| | Wrote short-term goals & implementation strategies. | Lack of skill |
| | Recorded progress toward goals. | Lack of skill |
| | Wrote long-term goals (1, 5, & 10 year) & implementation strategies. | Lack of skill |

*Note*. This research was gathered while the author was a counselor at Millcreek Elementary School, Lexington, KY.

## Discussion

I observed students making progress in goal setting, attitude and behavior changes, and report card grades. Initially, students had great difficulty writing one goal with an implementation plan. Eventually, they were able to write three goals quickly so that there was time to continue with another activity during the

same session. At the onset, one fifth-grade boy was noted for his loud disruptive comments in response to another student's comments ("Man, that SUCKS!" was his favorite saying.) By the end of the last session he was no longer saying those words or making other loud interruptive comments. One of the sixth-grade girls expressed excitement about getting a history project completed on time. When report cards were issued near midtreatment, half of the students brought them to show me the improvements they had made in many subjects.

In response to evaluation questions during the last session, several students mentioned that they had learned how to feel better about themselves as well as how to get their work done on time. Thus, both students' self-reports and quantitative analysis indicated that procrastinating students who participated in the multimodal group improved their homework completion score to a greater degree than did those procrastinating students on a waiting list.

## Implications

When procrastinating students do not respond to problem-solving and time management skills and to a behavior modification—social reinforcement program, it may be helpful for the counselor to consider the problem in a broader sense. The positive changes in the homework completion rate of the students in this study suggests that a multimodal approach (Keat, 1977), although time consuming, may prove successful in working with this type of student. As a result, counselors might consider an intervention that emphasizes the acquisition of new skills and information about oneself as an alternative to more traditional strategies.

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*Editor's note*. A detailed description of treatment activities, including worksheets used, is available from Linda A. Morse, Cumberland Elementary School, 600 Cumberland Avenue, West Lafayette, IN 47096.

# Multimodal Counseling: Motivating Children to Attend School Through Friendship Groups

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> *Happiness! It is useless to seek it elsewhere than in this warmth of human relations.* (Saint Exupery, 1939, p. 32)

Where can children find the joy of human relationships in a setting where many persons gather? The school, of course, can provide such a place. Unfortunately, for many children, school is a place to be avoided. This article focuses on using a friendship group to create a setting in which children can experience themselves in positive ways. As they learn to feel more positively about themselves, the children will feel better about coming to school, at least on the day of the group meeting. But affiliations within the groups should generalize so that the children can experience more satisfying interpersonal relationships in a broader range of settings.

This article illustrates how to approach the humanistic goal of improved personal relationships by multimodal means. In the multimodal approach, Keat (1979) has proposed the HELPING (health, emotions, learning, personal relationships, imagery, need to know, guidance of ABCs) model as an alternative to the BASIC ID (behavior, affect, sensation, imagery, cognition, interpersonal relations, drugs) (Lazarus, 1976, 1981). Gerler has focused on the particular modes of drugs and diet (1979, 1980a), the interpersonal domain (1980b), and imagery (1980c, 1984).

In this article we provide a second-order analysis of one of the seven modes. That is, analysis of the HELPING approach has presented us with a concern: motivation of children to attend school. We believe one of the best ways to motivate children to attend school is to formulate some reason for them to come to school. Focusing on the personal relationship domain, therefore, we concentrated on this mode and performed a second-order analysis (Keat, 1979). The results of this procedure can be seen in Table 1. Using friendship (P) as a focus (Keat, 1982), we have outlined in the table what can take place to foster positive interpersonal relationships. Our group meetings covered the topics listed in six of the seven zones (see "Modality" heading in Table 1). Health was the only area not systematically covered, although some counselors (e.g., Carlson, 1982) do use the health mode alone as a focus for counseling efforts.

**Table 1**
**HELPING Children with Friendship (Second-Order Analysis)**

| Modality | Task, skill, concern | Training |
|---|---|---|
| *H*ealth | Overweight | Dieting and exercise (Mason, 1975) |
| | Cleanliness | Contracting (Keat & Guerney, 1980) |
| *E*motions-feelings | Feelings expression | Increase vocabulary<br>Feelings thermometer |
| | Concerns | Anxiety management (Keat, 1977) |
| *L*earning-school | Getting to school | Motivation to be in group |
| | Learning about others | I-learned statements |
| *P*ersonal relationships | Getting acquainted | Communication training<br>I-messages (Gordon, 1970)<br>Feelings bingo |
| | Getting along | Friendship training (Keat, 1980) |
| *I*magery interests | Low self-esteem | Overcoming Charlie Brown syndrome<br>Question of the day |
| *N*eed to know | Decision making | Problem-solving practice |
| | Mistaken thinking | Corrective self-talk |
| *G*uidance of ABCs | Getting along in group | Rules |
| | Group behavior | Behavior management system |

## Program Design

The following is a session-by-session outline of what to do in each group meeting. The group on which these procedures were used was composed of five boys in the third grade. The activities were designed by Deborah Raykovitz and implemented by Kathy Metzgar. Each of the 10 sessions lasted approximately 30 minutes.

### Session 1: Personal Relationships (P)

The purposes of Session 1 are to help the children become better acquainted with the other group members and to encourage good listening. The target behaviors are attending the group and verbal participation in asking questions.

The session begins by introducing yourself and having each group member do the same. Second, present the children with group details: (a) length per day (30 minutes), (b) number of sessions ($n$ = 10), (c) focus of group (friendship), and (d) points earned for specific behaviors (e.g., targeted behaviors earned 1 point for sessions 1–6, each child got 1 point for attending the group, and 75 points gave a child the right to bring a friend to an additional group meeting). Third, explain that one way people get acquainted is by asking questions. Have children brainstorm questions. Emphasize things the children have in common and good listening techniques by using "Making a New Friend" (McElmurry & Tom, 1981). In this exercise, ask participants to find a partner and discuss questions such as family likes and dislikes about school, then tell the group about one of the most important things learned. Fourth, have members share one "I learned" statement about the asking questions exercise (e.g., "I learned that Joe has two horses"). Finally, inform students that the next session will be devoted to group rules; therefore, they need to think about what group rules they want.

### Session 2: Guidance of ABCs

The purpose of Session 2 is to determine important rules for group discussion. The target behaviors are attending the group, coming prepared, and sharing the question of the day.

First, review some questions and answers from the previous week. Second, brainstorm rules and consequences for group discussion. The group rule suggestion list is as follows:

1. You have the right to pass.
2. Only one person talks at a time.
3. Raise your hand to speak.
4. Listen carefully.
5. Feelings shared are top secret.

The consequences for breaking the rules are as follows:

1. Receive a warning.
2. Take a time-out or lose points.
3. Return to the classroom for that group session.

Third, introduce Behavior Management System cards. Green cards indicate a warning and red cards indicate a time-out. Place the time-out rules on a poster

in front of the time-out chairs so the children can read the rules while they take a time-out. The time-out rules state:

1. Sit in chair with all four chair legs on floor.
2. Sit quietly.
3. Face away from the group.
4. Set timer for 3 minutes—touch timer only once.
5. When time is up, you may join the group. . . . WELCOME BACK!

Fourth, introduce the question of the day to reemphasize that questions can help people get to know each other better. The following is a sample list of questions of the day:

1. Ask another player: What's your favorite thing to do?
2. Pretend to be an animal and ask the group to guess what you are.
3. Ask another player: If you had one wish, what would you wish for?
4. It's okay to feel jealous. When was a time you felt jealous?
5. What do you think is the color of love? Why?
6. Tell about a time you felt sad.
7. If you could be anyone else, who would that be? Why?
8. What time of the day do you like best?
9. If you were moving and could take only three things with you, what would they be?
10. Name three things that make a family happy.
11. What do you think of when you think of grandmother?
12. What is your favorite room in the house? Why?
13. What do you say to yourself when you're having a hard time learning something new?
14. Tell me something that happened with a teacher in school that you'll never forget.
15. What do you think is the difference between a friend and a best friend?

Finally, inform group members that the next meeting will be devoted to naming the group, and then ask them to think of possible suggestions.

### Session 3: Need to Know

The purpose of the third session is to have each child understand and practice group problem solving. The target behaviors are (a) sharing a feeling (the second activity in the session), (b) answering the question of the day, and (c) participating in group problem solving (see the fourth activity of the fourth session).

First, review group rules and consequences. Second, pick a child to ask the other group members if there is anything they would like to share with the group before it gets started. The third activity is the question of the day.

Finally, introduce the steps to problem solving: name the problem, brainstorm, evaluate, choose, and try it out. Inform the group members that sometimes it will be their job to solve problems together and that their first effort will be in naming the group.

### Session 4: Emotions and Personal Relationships

The purpose of the fourth session is to increase the student's feeling vocabulary. The target behaviors are to brainstorm feeling words and to use "I-messages." First, review the previous week. Second, brainstorm feeling words. Third, introduce I-messages—"I feel _____ today because _____."

Finally, play "Feelings Bingo" using I-messages. Feelings Bingo is similar to regular bingo, but with the following exceptions. The caller asks a group member to share an I-message after each feeling is called. The winner becomes the new caller and determines the criteria for winning (e.g., horizontal, diagonal, four corners). The board can be any facsimile of what appears in the boxed material.

**Feelings Bingo Game**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Happy | Afraid | Worried | Free space |
| Sad | Timid | Mad | Lonely |
| Joyful | Excited | Scared | Smart |
| Angry | Tired | Good | Overwhelmed |

### Session 5: Learning and School

The purpose of the fifth session is to increase the student's awareness of hidden verbal messages and nonverbal cues. The target behavior is to role play reading between the lines. First, review the previous week (good listening and brainstorming). Second, introduce the concept of reading between the lines. Third, role play reading between the lines by having the leader read the questions. The manner in which they are read and enunciated can have various connotations. Hypothetical items for reading between the lines are the following:

1. I'm going to Florida next week.
2. Slam door, sit down—I'll never talk to him again!
3. My dog died last night.
4. I'm just learning how to shoot pool!
5. You have an Atari?
6. I can spell supercalifragilisticexpealidocious!
7. I just love living in Pennsylvania.

The final activity is the question of the day.

### Session 6: Emotions and Feelings

The purpose of the sixth session is to help each child understand that feelings can come in degrees and in feeling families (i.e., groups of similar feelings such as frustration and anger). The target behaviors are using the feelings thermometer (Green, 1978) and sharing a feeling and the degree to which it is felt.

First, review the previous week (reading between the lines). The second activity is the question of the day. Third, look at the feelings brainstormed in Session 4 and discuss feeling families and degrees of families. Finally, use the feelings thermometer (Green, 1978).

### Session 7: Emotions and Guidance of ABCs

The first purpose of the seventh session is to have all students work as part of a group effort to earn points. The group goal was to earn 200 points. The first target behavior (see below) was worth 15 points, and the second target behavior was worth 10 points. The first session was 10 activity points and the fifth was 15 points. The goal was 50 points per session. Each counselor should work out a point system that fits the desired goals. The second purpose of the session is to determine what concerns the students have.

The target behaviors are (a) comparisons between honest feelings of group members and (b) group members giving friendly advice to each other. The first activity is the question of the day. Second, review the previous week and hand out the feelings thermometer. The third activity is honest discussion about feelings. Fourth, introduce feeling of worry (i.e., "What do you worry about?"). Finally, brainstorm what people worry about.

### Session 8: Need to Know

The eighth session's purpose is to increase the student's awareness about self-talk. The target behavior is to collect group points by discussing worry and using corrective self-talk (e.g., "Everything is going to be all right.").

The first activity is the question of the day. Second, review last week (what people worry about). Third, introduce self-talk. Fourth, practice self-talk using Charlie Brown handout (a picture of Charlie with cartoon-like balloons to be filled in with thoughts). Group members are to write their fears in the circles and a corrective self-talk statement outside each.

### Session 9: Need to Know, Imagery

The purpose of the ninth session is to help the students understand that it is okay to make mistakes. The target behaviors are self-talk and making mistakes. The first activity is the question of the day. Second, return their Charlie Brown handouts and review self-talk. Third, complete the handout. Finally, discuss individual handouts with the group.

### Session 10: Multimodal Summary

The purposes of the last session are to evaluate the group and to review everything accomplished in the sessions. The target behavior is evaluative and integrative thinking. The three activities are the question of the day, reviewing major points of sessions, and evaluation.

## Results

To determine any effects of the group meetings, we compared the attendance records of the five boys from February 1983 with their attendance records of February 1984. If attendance improved overall, the group may have had some impact on the five male members. This does not mean that the group was solely responsible for the improved attendance; rather, it may have played a role in the increased daily attendance while the group was in session. If this was the case, then conducting similar groups in the future would certainly be an option for guidance counselors. The results can be seen in Table 2.

According to the table, four of the participants improved their daily attendance from 1983 to 1984. The fifth boy showed no difference in attendance. In 1983, the group was absent an average of 6 days; in 1984, the average dropped to less than 1 day.

In addition to the main goal of increased attendance, the other goals of learning to cooperate with peers were reached. The goal for Session 1 was to help group members become acquainted with one another and to encourage good listening. Both verbal behaviors (talking) and nonverbal behaviors (smiling, looking at each other) of the group indicated that the subgoals of friendship were being achieved.

**Table 2**
**Attendance Results**

| Days Absent | February 1983 | February 1984 |
|---|---|---|
| Subject one | 2 | 0 |
| Subject two | 6 | 1 |
| Subject three | 14 | 0 |
| Subject four | 5 | 1 |
| Subject five | 3 | 3 |

The purpose for Session 2 was to determine important rules for group discussion. By having the group work together, we achieved a sense of group cohesion. Both of these goals were achieved in Session 2. The five boys devised their own adequate list of group rules. Also, they worked well together and seemed to enjoy each other's company.

The goal of Session 3 was to have each child understand and practice group problem solving. The five boys all did this well by actively participating in solving the problem confronting them: naming the group.

In Session 4, the children's goal was to increase their feelings vocabulary. Everyone brainstormed feeling words and shared at least one I-message with the group. This sharing conveyed a sense of trust and cohesion.

Session 5's goal was to increase the student's awareness of hidden verbal messages and nonverbal cues through the use of role playing. Only one participant had problems with reading between the lines. Other group members tried to help him understand the concept, but by the end of the session, he still did not understand it.

The purpose of Session 6 was to convey the idea that feelings can be grouped by families and can be measured in degrees. This point was well accepted by the children; they used the same feelings on their thermometers but colored in different degrees. The target of 75 points was reached by the end of Session 6. Thus, the boys earned their special activity of bringing a friend to the group.

Session 7's goals were to give the children the opportunity to work together for a group effort and to introduce the feeling of worry. The first goal was achieved from the beginning of this session until the group terminated. The boys earned points for working together through brainstorming and a discussion. Everyone participated well, thus earning group points for self-disclosure. This discussion related to the second goal because all group

members talked about why they were currently worried. The session was productive.

The purpose of Session 8 was to increase the boys' awareness of self-talk, but the boys had another goal. They wanted to discuss how a person could tell when someone else was worried. Thus, although the session's original goal was not attained, the boys' personal goal was.

Session 9 was designed to aid the children in understanding that everyone makes mistakes. Because the children had already shared what worried them, they decided to brainstorm ways of dealing with worry. All group members understood that everyone makes mistakes and decided it would be beneficial to devise a way to deal with worry resulting from errors. All group members contributed various ways of dealing with worry.

The final session was held to evaluate the group and to discuss important points from the previous sessions. All group members completed an anonymous evaluation form, and we openly discussed all activities. The second goal of 200 points was not attained by the group; thus, they were not able to participate in the final special activity. During a follow-up meeting, however, the boys' group efforts were recognized when they were permitted to play "Feelings Twister," a game based on the commercial game "Twister." In the boys' game, feelings were substituted for the colors used in the regular Twister game. All other procedures were similar. The feelings used on the large floor gameboard were happy, sad, worried, glad, jealous, and mad. Once one of the six feelings was indicated on the game spinner, the children were instructed to place either a foot or a hand on that feeling. The game ended when a player lost his balance.

## Summary

Five third-grade boys were chosen to participate in a friendship group with the objective of increasing their daily attendance at school. Participation in the group seemed to be a factor in increasing the daily attendance of four of the five children; the fifth boy's daily attendance remained the same.

Components of friendship training were also used in the group through skill learning (i.e., problem solving, determining rules). One of the obvious outcomes—group cohesiveness—was displayed over and over.

Other guidance counselors may wish to try a similar program in their school. Modifications to accommodate individual situations are open to counselor creativity.

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# Elementary School Counseling Research and the Classroom Learning Environment

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Do elementary school counselors contribute to children's learning? Some studies in the *Elementary School Guidance & Counseling* journal have shown that counselors can improve children's learning and cognitive functioning. Costar's study (1980), for example, measured the effects of a program on test-taking skills with fourth graders and found small gains in reading test scores among the students. Another study (Harris, 1976) demonstrated a counseling program's positive effects on thinking skills among fifth and sixth graders. Other studies (Deutsch & Wolleat, 1981; Quatrano & Bergland, 1974) have found positive effects of elementary school counseling on children's cognitive skills in career-related areas.

Despite the limited research on elementary school counseling that deals with the cognitive domain, elementary school counselors can make a strong case for their contributions to the classroom learning environment. Considerable research evidence outside the counseling literature indicates that children's learning and cognitive development depend on how children behave in school (Hoge & Luce, 1979), how children feel about themselves (Braun, 1976), how children function socially (Cartledge & Milburn, 1978), and how children use their senses (Richardson, DiBenedetto, & Bradley, 1977) and their mental images (Pressley, 1977). These areas are, of course, important components of elementary school counseling programs designed to promote children's learning (see Gerler, Kinney, & Anderson, 1985, for an extensive review of research on various domains important to children's learning).

In this article, I review the research published in *ESG&C* from 1974 to 1984. This review explores research evidence of elementary school counselors' effectiveness in helping children to improve classroom behavior, to explore feelings, to improve socially, and to enhance sensory awareness and mental imagery. This review is intended to help counselors know what research indicates about the nature and extent of their contributions to the learning environment in elementary schools. Elementary school counselors should be able to use this evidence for demonstrating the importance of their work to school policy makers.

## Elementary School Counseling Research: 1974–1984

### Does Counseling Improve Children's Behavior?

Research has examined various strategies for behavior change used by elementary school counselors to encourage the classroom behaviors necessary for academic success. Table 1 summarizes the research on behavior change published in *ESG&C* from 1974 to 1984. Several of these studies focused on counselors' consulting practices with teachers. Cobb and Richards (1983), for instance, studied teacher consultation in combination with classroom guidance and group counseling and found a significant reduction in behavior problems among fourth and fifth graders. Lewin, Nelson, and Tollefson (1983) studied consultation with groups of student teachers and found significant positive changes in children's behavior as reported by the student teachers. (The researchers, however, found no change in the student teachers' negative attitudes toward the children whose behavior was reportedly changed.) Moracco and Kazandkian (1977) examined consulting strategies with teachers of first, second, and third graders and found improved classroom behavior as measured by a behavior rating scale. Hansen and Himes (1977) also reported promising results from consulting with teachers about students' classroom behavior.

Researchers have examined behavior change methods other than consultation with teachers. Thomas (1974) found that videotape modeling (a videotape of appropriate attentiveness in the classroom) significantly increased the attentiveness of first graders. Bleck and Bleck (1982) used play group counseling with disruptive third graders to raise self-esteem scores and behavior rating scores significantly. Other researchers of elementary school counseling have found that promising behavior change results from reinforcement programs (Hosford & Bowles, 1974), from behavior contracts (Thompson, Prater, & Poppen, 1974), and from various group counseling and group guidance approaches (Kern & Hankings, 1977; Kern, Kelley, & Downey, 1973; West, Sonstegard, & Hagerman, 1980). Finally, and perhaps most encouraging, Downing (1977) found that group counseling designed to modify the behavior of sixth-grade children had the additional benefit of significantly improving achievement.

Thus, elementary school counselors have used various techniques to modify children's classroom behavior successfully. Consultation with teachers seems a particularly useful approach to improving children's behavior. Also promising is Downing's (1977) finding that programs to promote behavior change may result in improved academic performance in the classroom. Elementary school counselors should share this evidence with school administrators and other decision makers in the schools.

**Table 1**
**Behavior Change Research in ESG&C (1974–1984)**

| Study | Participants | Outcome | Significance |
|---|---|---|---|
| Bleck & Bleck (1982) | 73 3rd graders | Improved behavior | .05 |
| Cobb & Richards (1983) | 90 4th and 5th graders | Improved behavior | .05 |
| Downing (1977) | 33 6th graders | Improved PIAT scores | .05 |
| Hansen & Hines (1977) | 45 teachers | No reported behavior changes in children | NS |
| Hosford & Bowles (1974) | 136 4th–6th graders | Improved attendance | NS |
| Kern & Hankins (1977) | 63 4th & 5th graders | Improved behavior | .05 |
| Kern, Kelley, & Downey (1973) | 54 4th–6th graders | Improved behavior | .05 |
| Lewin, Nelson, & Tollefson (1983) | 35 student teachers | Improved child behavior | .05 |
| Moracco & Kazandkian (1977) | 60 1st–3rd graders | Improved behavior | .05–.01 |
| Thomas (1974) | 69 1st graders | Improved attending behavior | .01 |
| Thompson, Prater, & Poppen (1974) | 71 2nd–5th graders | Improved behavior | NS |
| West, Sonstegard, & Hagerman (1980) | Ages and numbers varied | Improved behavior and academic performance | .05–.01 |

## Does Affective Education Work?

In the late 1960s and throughout most of the 1970s, elementary school counselors devoted much of their time to conducting affective education programs to raise children's levels of self-esteem. Table 2 summarizes the affective

**Table 2**
**Affective Education Research in ESG&C (1974–1984)**

| Study | Participants | Outcome | Significance |
|---|---|---|---|
| Buffington & Stilwell (1980) | 190 4th & 5th graders | Improved self-control | NS |
| Calsyn, Pennell, & Harter (1984) | 44 6th graders | Improved self-esteem | NS |
| Day & Griffin (1980) | 187 2nd, 4th, & 6th graders | Positive attitudes | NS |
| Deffenbacher & Kemper (1974) | 21 6th graders | Improved GPA | .001 |
| Edmondson (1979) | 165 4th graders | Improved self-concept | NS |
| Kaiser & Sillin (1977) | 184 6th graders | Improved self-concept | .05 |
| Wirth (1977) | 184 3rd–6th graders | Improved achievement responsibility | .05–.01 |

education research published in *ESG&C* from 1974 to 1984. This literature reported improved scores on self-esteem measures as a result of the popular Magic Circle program (a small-group program designed to help children learn listening skills) (Edmondson, 1979) and because of other affective classroom guidance activities (Calsyn, Pennell, & Harter, 1984; Kaiser & Sillin, 1977). Additional research found slight improvements in children's self-control as a result of affective education (Buffington & Stilwell, 1980) and found considerable enthusiasm among children for participation in affective guidance programs such as the Magic Circle program (Day & Griffin, 1980).

It was hoped that these programs would improve children's achievement as a result of improving their self-esteem, increasing their sense of self-control, and increasing their enthusiasm for school. That hope has been realized in part. Wirth (1977), for example, reported significantly higher scores among fifth and sixth graders on an achievement responsibility scale when an affective education component was added to the school's regular reading program. Deffenbacher and Kemper (1974) reported significantly improved grade point averages among sixth graders involved in a program to decrease test anxiety.

Elementary school counselors need to present this research evidence to teachers and others in schools. As one counselor stated:

> Teachers keep telling me that they don't have time to do Magic Circles and other things like that because they need to teach reading and math. I need to work harder at showing them that children who practice listening in Magic Circles will do better at reading and math. (Gerler, 1982, p. 139)

This counselor's positive approach is exemplary. Counselors can use the affective education research cited here to help more professionals in the schools see the value of exploring feelings in the classroom.

## Do Counseling Activities Help Children Socially?

Another aspect of research on elementary school counseling has focused on children's relationships with peers, parents, and teachers. Table 3 summarizes the research on training to develop interpersonal skills that was published in *ESG&C* from 1974 to 1984. The research on counselors' work to improve relationships among children has been particularly encouraging. Vogelsong's (1978) communication skills training with fifth graders significantly improved the children's scores on a test of empathy, and a similar program studied by Calsyn, Quicke, and Harris (1980) produced significantly higher scores among fourth and fifth graders on a communication skills instrument. Keelin and Keelin (1976) found promising effects on interpersonal behavior among children who participated in the Magic Circle program, and Kameen and Brown (1978) found increased peer acceptance among students receiving individual and group counseling.

Another important area of elementary school counselor's work—training parents to communicate better with children—also has produced positive research results. Giannotti and Doyle (1982) found that parent effectiveness training improved parents' attitudes toward parenting and improved children's scores on behavior rating scales and self-concept measures. Summerlin and Ward (1981) also indicated that parenting groups improved parents' attitudes toward parenting. Studies by Hayes, Cunningham, and Robinson (1977) and by Wantz and Recor (1984) found that parent effectiveness groups and children's counseling groups improved scores for children on measures of motivation, anxiety, and self-esteem. A study by Frazier and Matthes (1974), which compared Adlerian and behavioral parent education programs, found the Adlerian approach resulted in improved scores among parents on a child-rearing practices scale. Furthermore, Hudgins and Shoudt (1977) indicated improved responses and communication skills among participants in a parent education program.

**Table 3**
**Research on Interpersonal Skills Training in ESG&C (1974–1984)**

| Study | Participants | Outcome | Significance |
|---|---|---|---|
| Asbury (1984) | 9 teachers & 9 children | Improved child behavior | Baseline data showed change |
| Brown & Kameen (1975) | 19 teachers | Improved professional competence | .002–.001 |
| Calsyn, Quicke, & Harris (1980) | 178 4th & 5th graders | Improved communication skills | .001 |
| Frazier & Matthes (1975) | 74 parents | Improved parenting skills | .05 |
| Giannotti & Doyle (1982) | 92 parents, 46 children | Improved parent attitude, improved child behavior, & improved child self-concept | .01 |
| Hayes, Cunningham, & Robinson (1977) | 92 5th & 6th graders | Improved motivation & self-esteem, reduced anxiety | .05–.01 |
| Hudgins & Shoudt (1977) | 10 parents | Improved communication skills | .001 |
| Kameen & Brown (1978) | 714 K–7 students & 22 teachers | Improved self-perception & peer acceptance among children, no changes in teachers | NS |
| Keelin (1976) | 20 4-year-olds | Improved interpersonal behavior | NS |
| Shelton & Dobson (1974) | 60 disadvantaged children | Improved attendance & GPA | .05–.01 |
| Summerlin & Ward (1981) | 50 parents | Improved parenting attitudes | .001 |
| Vogelsong (1978) | 16 5th graders | Improved empathy | .001 |
| Wantz & Recor (1984) | 11 parents & 9 children | Improved child behavior | .05 |
| Zirges (1981) | Teachers (Unspecified number) | Improved student self-esteem & reading | .025–.001 |

Research on groups of teachers that is related to counselors' work in the interpersonal domain also has produced encouraging results. Brown and Kameen (1975) studied inservice groups for teachers designed to improve teaching behaviors. The study found improved ratings of professional competence for the participants. Asbury's (1984) study showed that empathy training for teachers may result in improved student behavior. Even more promising were Shelton and Dobson's (1974) findings of significantly improved school attendance and grade point averages among children whose teachers had participated in communication training. In addition, Zirges' (1981) study found that teacher communication training resulted in improved student self-esteem and reading performance as well as improved job satisfaction among teachers.

Together, these studies provide impressive evidence that elementary school counseling programs designed to improve relations at school and at home can have positive effects including improved academic performance among students. It is important for counselors to inform parents, teachers, and school administrators of the important role counselors play in the school's social environment. The research reviewed here should help counselors speak convincingly about the importance of their human relations programs.

## Are Mental Imagery and Sensory Awareness Activities Effective?

In keeping with Will Rogers' statement that "schools ain't what they used to be and never was," some innovative elementary school counseling programs have developed imagery and sensory guidance activities to relieve high levels of stress among children. These kinds of activities are not well understood by many parents and teachers and, in fact, some counselors shy away from work in these areas. One counselor commented: "Mental imagery work scares me a little, though what I've read about it makes it seem relatively harmless. I still wonder how much good it actually is. I guess I need some training in mental imagery" (Gerler, 1982, p. 142).

The research on elementary school counselors' use of imagery and sensory activities is promising, although not extensive (see Table 4). The research deals primarily with relaxation training. Some studies (Gumaer & Voorneveld, 1975; Vacc & Greenleaf, 1980), for instance, have found indications that relaxation training (involving sensory and imagery activities) reduces anxiety, improves behavior, increases self-esteem, and improves social status among fourth and fifth graders. Omizo (1981) found that relaxation training for hyperactive boys resulted in improved behavior ratings from teachers and parents. In addition, Danielson (1984) found some increases on achievement test scores resulting from relaxation and imagery training with children. Most of the other literature

**Table 4**
**Research on Imagery and Sensory Training in ESG&C (1974–1984)**

| Study | Participants | Outcome | Significance |
|---|---|---|---|
| Danielson (1984) | 5th graders (Unspecified number) | Improved achievement scores | .05–.01 |
| Gumaer & Voorneveld (1975) | 20 4th & 5th graders | Increased self-esteem & social status, reduced anxiety | NS |
| Omizo (1981) | 30 hyperactive boys | Improved behavior | .03 |
| Vacc & Greenleaf (1980) | 28 emotionally handicapped children | Improved behavior & reduced anxiety | NS |

related to elementary school counselors' use of imagery and sensory activities has described model programs with little discussion of research or evaluation of the model programs.

Because some parents and teachers (and even some counselors) are unclear about the value of mental imagery and sensory awareness activities, counselors should increase their efforts to understand the research in this area and to communicate research results to parents and teachers. Only then will this important aspect of counselors' work be properly recognized in schools.

## Conclusion

This review of more than a decade of research on elementary school counseling establishes that counseling programs can positively influence the affective, behavioral, and interpersonal domains of children's lives and, as a result, can affect children's achievement positively. The research also holds promise for the direct intervention of counselors in the imagery and sensory domains.

Counselors and researchers should note that many published studies of elementary school counseling have serious weaknesses. For instance, although most studies presented in this review used control groups, few of them included

placebos. Critelli and Neumann (1984) argued persuasively in favor of using placebos in studies of psychological interventions. Further studies of elementary school counseling programs should take this argument into consideration.

Another important weakness of research on elementary school counseling has been the lack of detailed information about the participants. Authors of future studies should take special care in describing research participants.

This research review provides counselors with evidence of their importance to the school's learning climate. There is some experimental research published outside the *ESG&C* journal that further demonstrates the improvement in children's academic performance following elementary school counseling. Gerler, Kinney, and Anderson (1985), for instance, found that elementary school counselors can significantly improve the academic progress of underachieving children. Gerler and Locke (1980) also proved the positive effects of elementary school counseling on children's school achievement. These additional studies further support the importance of counselors in the learning climate of elementary schools.

If counselors use the available research evidence, they are likely to find increased support for their programs from teachers, parents, and school administrators. For example, counselors can use the tables or other sections of this article in presentations at parent-teacher meetings and at school board meetings to provide evidence that well conceived counseling programs have positive effects on classroom learning environments. This evidence is powerful because the majority of studies cited have results at the .05 level of statistical significance or better. Even the studies listed in Tables 1 through 4 with nonsignificant (NS) findings offer positive comments on counselors' work. In short, the past decade of research on elementary counseling holds considerable promise for counselors and the schools they serve.

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## Chapter 8
## Counseling Issues Related to Learning in a Changing World

*Issues for elementary school counselors to consider about learning in a changing world:*

1. Many people assume that the teacher's primary area of concern is the cognitive domain while the counselor's concern is the affective domain. How do the two areas complement each other?
2. Standardized achievement test results from your elementary school indicate that students are falling behind in math and language skills. Describe several intervention strategies that you as an elementary school counselor might use to help these students improve their math and language skills.
3. Develop an inservice program to help teachers incorporate career education activities into the teaching of basic subjects. How might these activities improve student performance in basic subjects?
4. How might elementary school counselors help children overcome procrastination with school work?
5. How can elementary school counselors collaborate with teachers to improve the learning environment in classrooms?
6. How might peer helpers be used to assist underachievers to improve their work at school? How would peer helpers benefit from this experience?
7. Classroom guidance has had positive effects on children's success in school. Develop several group guidance activities that you can use to improve the level of academic achievement among students.
8. How can elementary school counselors encourage parents to become more involved in children's learning?
9. Discuss this statement: "Reducing class size is more important to children's success in school than is hiring additional elementary school counselors."
10. What is the single most important contribution elementary school counselors make to children's learning?